

News from the colony

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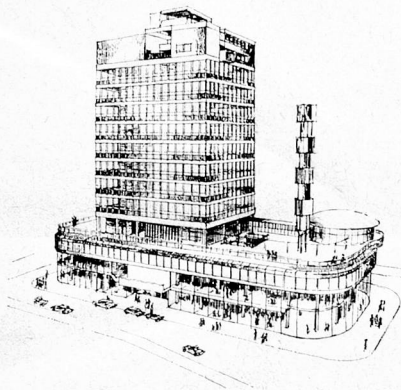
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NEWS FROM THE COLONY



**SWISS CENTRE
IN LONDON**

Swiss Economic Council Plans

On 26th November, an appeal was launched by Federal Councillor Schaffner for the Swiss Centre in London. At the meeting in Berne, Mr. J. P. Christen, Chairman of the Swiss Economic Council in London, gave an address outlining the proposed creation of a Trade Promotion and Information Office in the Swiss Centre in London.

A permanent office for the promotion of trade relations between the two countries, especially with regard to Swiss exports to the United Kingdom, is the first concern of the Economic Council. But it also welcomes wholeheartedly the creation of the proposed Forum of Switzerland and supports the efforts of Swiss Fair Ltd. to put a cross section of Swiss quality products on show in typically Swiss surroundings.

Mr. Christen then described the Swiss Economic Council which, he said, was an independent organ of Swiss economic life. It had about forty members of Swiss nationality who were in leading positions in Swiss firms or branches of Swiss undertakings in the U.K. All the most important industries as well as commerce and finance were represented on the Council by personalities familiar with conditions in Switzerland as well as in Great Britain. The Council's income consisted entirely of free contributions made by its members, and work on the Council was on a voluntary basis.

Mr. Christen explained that the activities of an organisation dependent on voluntary co-operation and without firm revenue were naturally somewhat limited. In spite of this, it was possible to do fruitful work. As an example, he recalled the successful "Swiss Fortnight in Great Britain".

For some time already, the Swiss Economic Council has been considering whether it would be possible to expand and to put its activities on a wider basis. As there is no permanent non-governmental organisation for the promotion of Anglo-Swiss trade relations, all enquiries are dealt with by the Economic Department of the Swiss Embassy. Once the building of the Swiss Centre in the centre of London had become a reality it was immediately clear that this was a unique and obviously last opportunity to create a permanent Trade Promotion Centre under ideal conditions.

"We Swiss in London", continued Mr. Christen, "have come to the conclusion after careful consideration

that this aim can best be reached by creating a permanent and independent organisation supported by Swiss private economy. The lack of such a strong point in the British capital has been felt for many years. It is significant that the Swiss Economic Council was able to render valuable services to the authorities of both countries during the difficult 'twenties and in the critical times of the second world war, and all thanks to its independent position. With regard to the future, our concern is to be ready for any situation with an efficient and even more competent organisation. It would be impossible to conjure up such an agency on sudden and urgent demand".

Mr. Christen next referred to the importance of the British market for the Swiss export industry and warned against underestimating the significance of the British metropolis as trade and finance centre. Clearly more and more effort was demanded with the increased intensity of international competition. In this connection he mentioned the various exhibition and trade centres planned and realised in London and other capitals by the most important competitors of Switzerland.

The future Swiss Trade Promotion Centre in London is to serve the Swiss industries in general, and Swiss firms without a representation in Great Britain in particular. It is visualised that the Office should be in continuous contact with industry, trade and banking, with the Swiss Office for Development of Trade (OSEC) Chambers of Commerce and trade federations, as well as with the authorities in both countries.

The Office will be managed by a well-versed full-time Secretary and administered and supervised by the Swiss Economic Council.

The Council will support to the utmost the realisation of a communal Swiss Centre and will co-operate with Swiss Fair Ltd., and the Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom. It will also help in the co-ordination within the Swiss Centre. Last, but not least, the Council hopes that the appeal for funds in Switzerland will produce a sound financial basis on which a permanent Trade Promotion Centre can be established. Only if that is completely assured, will the Economic Council be prepared to create such an Office for Trade Promotion and Information.

It is visualised that running costs will be covered by annual contributions of member firms, of say, £20. At the time the appeal was launched, already over one hundred firms had promised co-operation with such an office. Naturally, the number will have to be increased considerably in order to balance the budget for any length of time.

Mr. Christen finished his appeal as follows: "The Swiss Economic Council is truly familiar with the British market and watches carefully any development. It considers the proposed Trade Promotion Centre as highly desirable, especially for the future. We are convinced that with it Swiss Industry and Trade will create an effective instrument which can today and in the future render valuable services in the interest of our country. To realise our plans, we are dependent on your financial support. The Swiss Economic Council appeals to you therefore to give your wholehearted support to our common appeal for the great communal project".